

Heatwave in Cook County

by Shirl

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Summary: COMPLETED-This is an ERX-files crossover. Mulder and Scully visit the ER in search of Carter, to warn him about a dangerous woman in his life. Set during Season 5.

Heatwave in Cook County

Disclaimer: I don't own any of the characters from the X-files or ER.

Author's Note: This story is a little strange. It's an X-files/ER crossover, though it concentrates more on ER. I had an idea one day that wouldn't go away, and this is the end result. I wrote this one with humour in mind, so please feel free to laugh!

Please let me know that you've read my story. I would love to hear what you think of it! Send feedback to: Shirley.yoshinaka@sprint.ca
Thanks :)

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Dana Scully made her way down the hall, her heels clicking loudly on the tile floor. She was in a slightly grumpy mood this morning, not having slept well the night before. It was this heat and humidity. A large area of the US was experiencing a major heatwave and it was starting to affect her as well. The air conditioner in her apartment had broken down late yesterday afternoon, so she had spent most of the night tossing and turning. She had decided to come into work a little early, for the blessed cool air, if nothing else. She wasn't sure if her partner was in yet, but decided to check.

"Morning, Scully," a voice called out, just as Scully came to the office door.

"Morning." She leaned against the doorframe, seeing her partner flip through some files, his desk a total chaos area as usual. He continued to read, not even glancing up at her. "How did you know it

was me?"

Fox Mulder finally looked up, grinning. "I can recognize the sound of your heels from a mile away. They sound very distinctive."

"Humph," was Scully's reply. She moved some papers aside so she could perch on a corner of his desk. She almost knocked over an open can of Pepsi and moved it to a safer location. How could he drink that at 8:30 in the morning? She then spied a half eaten hamburger and made a face as Mulder reached for it with one hand. "Where did you get a hamburger at this hour of the morning?" She watched with an expression of disgust as he took a huge bite, the various toppings threatening to spill over onto his tie.

"I have my sources," he declared, after swallowing a mouthful. "Confidential." He placed the burger down again, and looked up to find Scully pointing to her chin.

"Mustard," she said succinctly, rolling her eyes when he simply wiped it off with his hand.

"Is it gone?"

"Yeah. So what are you up to this morning?"

Mulder stood up and walked over to the slide projector. "We got a lead in a case I've been following for a while." The projector made a little whirring sound, and an image appeared on the screen. It showed a large, black mark against a light green carpet. "This is all that's left of Stuart Wilson. This charred, black stain." The image changed to an almost identical black mark, this time marring the seat of a couch. "And here lies Frank Andrews." He looked back at Scully with a wry smile. "I could show you a few more, but I think you get the picture."

Scully remained seated on the desk and crossed her arms in front of her chest. "I suppose you suspect spontaneous combustion. A phenomenon that's never been scientifically proven."

"Au contraire. Combustion, yes. Spontaneous, no." He felt compelled to add, "Though it does exist, Scully. But that's a debate for another day." He pressed the remote control button and the screen now showed an attractive looking blond woman. "Here's our suspect. We'll just call her Roxanne since she's used various surnames in different cities. She's the common link between these men that have mysteriously combusted. She had a relationship with all of them. And I'd say they all ended rather badly."

Scully lifted an eyebrow. She said slowly, "So you're suggesting that this woman...Roxanne, was somehow responsible for killing these men? Did she set them on fire?"

"No. Investigations showed that in each case, no fuel of any kind was used to start a fire. And the heat was so intense, those charred stains were all that remained of the bodies."

"Yet you still think Roxanne is responsible? How?" Scully had a suspicion of where this was leading, but she wanted to hear Mulder say it.

"Pyrokinesis." He turned the projector off and came to stand by Scully, downing his soda. She said nothing and merely looked at him, so he said "It's the power..."

"I know what it is, Mulder," she interrupted. "I've read Firestarter."

It was Mulder's turn to raise his eyebrows. "Well, I never would have pegged you for a Stephen King fan. You're just full of surprises."

Had Scully been in a better mood, she would have come up with a witty retort. As it was, she simply fixed him with a withering stare.

"Geez, lighten up, would you Scully?" Mulder wondered what had put her in such a foul mood. "Yes, I believe Roxanne killed those men. She created a heat that was so intense, there was literally nothing left of the bodies." He threw the rest of his hamburger in the garbage and started to clear away his files. "So how soon can you get packed? We've got a flight to Chicago in two hours. Roxanne is working at an insurance company there."

Scully groaned. "Mulder, you can't be serious. This is not an X-file. I'm sure there's a reasonable explanation for how those men died. I'm not going to let you drag me to Chicago."

"I hear the heatwave isn't affecting the Windy City."

"I'll be ready in half an hour."

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It seemed to be especially chaotic in the ER of Cook County General today. The board was full, and there were still quite a few people sitting in chairs, waiting to be examined.

Randi had the phone to her ear, and was trying to gather up the papers of a file she had dropped. She was crouched down on the floor and spoke into the phone. "Hello? Yeah, I...no, do \*not\* put me on hold again! Hello?"

"Excuse me," a male voice called above her head.

"Just a minute! Hello?" she said into the phone. "Aargh!" she exclaimed, shoving the last form into the file folder. She stood up and slammed the receiver down. "Of all the rude, inconsiderate..."

"Sorry to bother you," the voice spoke again.

Randi finally looked up and her annoyed expression turned to one of interest. She smiled at the good looking guy, snapping her gum with a particularly loud pop. "That's ok. What can I do for ya?"

"I'm Agent Mulder with the FBI, and this is my partner Agent Scully."

Randi glanced at Scully and wondered if her auburn hair was natural or dyed. She also speculated on whether these two had a thing going.

"Can I see some ID?" she demanded.

Mulder and Scully exchanged glances and produced their ID badges for Randi to examine. She nodded, indicating that she was satisfied.

Trying to hide his amusement, Mulder said "We're looking for a Dr. John Carter. Is he in today?"

Kerry Weaver had just walked up to the admit desk and overheard Carter's name. "What's going on, Randi?"

"These are FBI agents," Randi said, shrugging her shoulder slightly. "They're looking for Carter."

Kerry moved closer to them. "Perhaps I can help you. I'm Kerry Weaver, an attending physician in the ER." She looked from one agent to the other. "Is Dr. Carter in some kind of trouble?"

"Not at all," Scully said reassuringly. "We would just like to ask him a few questions."

"I'm afraid he's seeing a patient right now. Perhaps you'd like to wait in the lounge," Kerry suggested.

Mulder and Scully made their way around the admit desk and started to follow Kerry down the hall. Before they got too far, Mulder said "Dr. Weaver. I'd like to ask you a couple of questions, if I may."

Kerry turned around to face them. "Of course."

"Do you know Dr. Carter well?"

Kerry nodded. "Yes, very well." She was trying to act composed, but she was worried. Why would the FBI want to question Carter?

"Have you noticed any change in his personality lately? Mood swings or short temperament?"

"No, not that I've noticed. He's a fine doctor, quite mild mannered and easy..."

A loud metallic sounding crash made all three of them turn their heads.

"Damnit, Lucy!" a male voice roared.

A curtain surrounding a patient was flung back, and Carter stormed down the hall. Lucy Knight came running after him. "I'm sorry, Dr. Carter. I don't think it's too bad...let me see."

"Carter!" Kerry said sharply, causing him to stop in mid-stride as he was about to brush past her. He gave her an irritated look. "What seems to be the problem?"

He held out a corner of his coat, pointing to a dark brown stain. "Look at this! I finally got a brand new lab coat and Lucy spilled iodine all over it!" He glared at the poor girl who was glaring right

back at him.

"I said I was sorry! It was an accident."

"Lucy, with you, everything is an accident." Carter quickly scanned some patient charts and grabbed one off the desk. He thrust it towards her. "Here, Mrs. Thompson is in Exam 3, complaining of abdominal pains. Get a history. But first, clean up the tray you knocked over." Lucy silently took the chart and turned on her heel. As she walked away, Carter called out "And try not to spill anything on her!"

"I don't think that was necessary," Kerry admonished. What was wrong with him? To be sure, it was hectic today for everyone, but this didn't seem like Carter at all.

"That girl is a walking disaster," he muttered.

"I seem to recall you spilling a few things in your med school days," Kerry said dryly, as Carter had the decency to blush. She suddenly remembered the FBI agents, who were standing by patiently. "Oh, Carter...these FBI agents..." She paused and turned to them apologetically. "I'm sorry, I didn't get your names."

Mulder introduced themselves and said "Dr. Carter, we'd like to talk with you when you have a moment."

Carter looked at the two agents with a frown. "What about?"

"We should probably speak in private," Scully said. "Dr. Weaver, you mentioned the lounge?"

"Yes, it's probably empty right now since everyone is so busy. If you'd like to talk in there, I'll make sure you're not disturbed."

"We'd appreciate it," Mulder said, looking at Carter expectantly.

Carter suddenly realized that he was the focus of everyone's attention, including several nurses and other staff that were standing around and watching them. He had no idea what this was about and felt uncomfortable under the scrutiny. "Uh, just give me a minute," he said hesitantly. "I'll meet you in the lounge."

Kerry showed the agents to the lounge, holding the door open for them to enter. As the door swung shut, Randi sidled up next to her.

"So, what's the scoop?" she asked in an excited tone. "Why do they want to question Carter?"

"Randi, it's none of our business," Kerry said firmly, although she was dying of curiosity herself. She addressed the rest of the staff that were still lingering around in a louder voice. "All right, everyone, get back to work please!"

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Scully sat down on the couch as Mulder walked around the room.

"Did you notice how short tempered he was?" Mulder asked. "I think Dr. Weaver had been about to say that Dr. Carter is easy going, so I would say he's definitely showing signs of mood swings."

"Which confirms your theory that Roxanne is somehow controlling his personality," Scully said, enjoying the quiet of the room. The noise outside had not been helping her headache.

"Exactly. According to the reports, family and friends were concerned about personality changes shortly after Roxanne started dating her soon-to-be victims. I think the same thing is happening here, and we have to warn Dr. Carter."

"Come on, Mulder," Scully said in exasperation, gesturing towards the door. "Did you notice how hectic it was out there? No wonder the man has a short fuse today. I'm starting to feel the same way!"

Mulder chose to ignore that last remark. He spotted an odd looking jar on the low table in front of Scully and leaned in for a closer look.

"What is that?" he asked, peering at the strange object suspended in a muddy brown liquid.

Scully tilted her head to the side. "Looks like someone's liver. And not a very healthy one, at that."

Mulder jumped back. "That's disgusting!"

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Lucy set the tray back in its place and surveyed the results of her cleanup. Not much damage had been done, except for the iodine stain on the floor. There wasn't much she could do about that, but hopefully one of the cleaning staff could take care of it.

She was still fuming over the way Carter had reacted. Well, over-reacted was a better word. The past few days he had been acting like a total ass. He had been barking orders at her, making sarcastic comments, and generally been miserable to be around. This last scene had been the final straw. He had completely embarrassed her in front of Dr. Weaver, and two strangers who looked like they were important members of the hospital. She wasn't going to let him get away with this.

"Don't worry, dear. It was just an accident. He shouldn't have yelled at you like that."

The voice broke into her thoughts and Lucy looked at the old woman, Mrs. Hamilton, who was lying on the exam bed.

"Dr. Carter's just under a lot of stress right now," Lucy found herself saying. \*Why did I say that? I don't need to defend him!\* she thought, slightly annoyed with herself.

"Even so, he shouldn't have spoken to you like that." Mrs. Hamilton raised her hand, motioning for Lucy to come closer. "Don't let him push you around," she advised in a low voice.

The corners of Lucy's mouth curled upwards. "Don't worry. I won't."

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Carter rubbed at the stain with some wet paper towels. It wasn't helping any. The stain actually wasn't that large. And truthfully, he had had a lot worse spilled on him. So why had he gotten so upset? He had been feeling really irritable lately, and he didn't know why. The only time he felt any kind of relief from his bad mood was when he was with Roxanne.

Just thinking about her made him relax a little. He was off tonight at six, and Roxanne was going to meet him here. He checked his watch. Just four more hours to go. He couldn't wait to get out of here. Now, if only Lucy wouldn't drop anything for the rest of the day, he'd be thankful.

He felt a sudden pang of remorse. Kerry was right, he'd done a lot of clumsy things as a med student. He shouldn't have been so hard on Lucy. She just had a way of getting under his skin. He didn't quite know why, but it was a fact. He made a mental note to apologize to her the first chance he got.

He heaved a sigh, tossing the crumpled paper towels into the waste basket. Now he had these FBI agents to deal with. What on earth could they want?

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"Sorry to keep you waiting," Carter said as he entered the lounge.

"No problem." Mulder smiled, trying to put Dr. Carter at ease. "We know how busy you are, so we won't take up too much of your time."

Mulder and Scully were seated on the couch, and Carter sat down on a chair across from them.

Carter cleared his throat. "So, what is this all about?"

"You've been seeing a woman, whom you know as Roxanne Please. Is that correct?" Mulder asked.

Carter was totally baffled now. But he answered the question. "Yes, that's right. How did you know?"

"We went to her office today, but she had left early. We talked to some of her co-workers and your name came up. She's going to be meeting you here after your shift?"

Carter nodded. "Yes, at six."

"How long have you known Roxanne?"

"About a month. Why are you asking me about her?"

Before Mulder could start in on his interesting theory, Scully thought she should make Dr. Carter aware of some facts. "Are you aware that Roxanne has used several aliases in different cities

across the US?" She withdrew a small piece of paper out of her pocket and unfolded it. She read out loud from the list. "Collins, Taylor, Steele, Warner, Ellis, and now Please."

Carter shook his head slowly, looking confused. "No, I had no idea. Aliases...is she some kind of criminal?" He couldn't even comprehend the thought.

"Nothing that's been proven...yet," Mulder stated, a little ominously.

Scully shot him a disapproving glance. "Under each alias, Roxanne has had a relationship with a different man. All five of those men have died under mysterious circumstances," she explained.

"We're concerned that you may become her next victim," Mulder continued. He considered his next words carefully and decided he should be blunt. "All that remained of her victims were black, charred stains. There were no bone or teeth fragments to be found. Their bodies simply combusted under enormously intense heat."

Carter visibly gulped. "You're saying Roxanne...burned them to death?"

"Yes, though not in the way you're thinking..." Mulder took a breath. "I'm convinced that Roxanne has an inner power, something akin to pyrokinesis."

Carter stared at him. "Pyro what?"

"Pyrokinesis," Mulder repeated. "It's the ability to set objects on fire. I think Roxanne possesses an even deadlier form of it, being able to control the body's internal temperature...raising it so high that the body simply combusts and burns itself up. I also believe that she has been influencing your personality, though I don't know for what purpose. Perhaps to bring you more under her control. Have you been experiencing changes in mood lately? Irritability for no reason?"

"Uh...I've been a little stressed lately," Carter muttered, still trying to grasp what he had just heard.

Scully quickly added, "Although my partner's theory may be debatable, it is a fact that all of Roxanne's previous boyfriends have died mysteriously. So we **are** concerned about your safety."

Carter sat there blankly for a moment and then smiled, waving a finger at them. "This is a joke, right? Jerry must have put you up to this. You're not really FBI agents."

"I assure you, we are," Mulder said.

"Come on, give it up. It must have been Malik, then." Carter was still smiling. He had to admit, these two actors were pretty good. They really had him going for a while. His smile faded slightly as he looked from one serious face to the other. "You're not putting me on? You're really from the FBI?"

"Would you like to see our IDs?" Scully asked, not blaming him in the

least for questioning their credibility. Sometimes she wondered the same thing.

Carter shot to his feet. "This is absolutely ridiculous!" he exclaimed, looking at them incredulously. "You don't actually expect me to believe this!" He waited for a response, but was met with silence.

Mulder finally spoke up, trying to muster all the sincerity he could into his tone. "Dr. Carter, I know this is difficult to take in, but if..."

"Difficult?" Carter snorted. "Excuse me, but I have patients to see. I think you've wasted enough of my time." Without a second glance, he stalked out of the room.

"That didn't go over very well," Scully stated dryly. "If he doesn't believe he's in danger, there's not much we can do for him."

"We can't give up that easily," Mulder insisted. "We at least have to talk to Roxanne when she gets here."

"All right," she agreed, thinking it couldn't hurt since they had come all this way. And there was no question that with five boyfriends dying in apparently the same way, suspicion pointed to Roxanne.

Mulder pulled out his cell phone, and Scully warned "You shouldn't use that in a hospital. It may interfere with equipment."

"Right, I wasn't thinking. I'll be back in a minute then."

Scully closed her eyes and leaned her head back against the couch. "Sure, take your time."

Mulder approached the admitting area and saw the desk clerk working at the computer. "Hi," he said. "Randi, isn't it?"

Randi smiled up at him. "Yeah, that's right." She was pleased that he had remembered.

"Unusual name," he commented. "May I use your phone? I promise, I won't be long."

She hesitated, but then gestured towards it. "Yeah, go ahead. You're not supposed to, but I'll make an exception for you."

"Thanks." Mulder fished in his pocket for an address book, completely unaware that Randi was giving him a once-over. She liked what she saw.

"I didn't catch your first name, Agent Mulder."

He picked up the receiver and started dialing. "It's Fox."

Randi raised an eyebrow and stopped chewing her gum for a moment. "Fox," she repeated. "Talk about unusual names." She paused. "I had a friend named Bambi, once."

Mulder was now engrossed in his phone conversation, and Randi turned back to the computer screen, disappointed. What would she have to do to get him to notice her?

As promised, he wasn't long on the phone. "Thanks again," he said, as he hung up. "Is there somewhere close by that my partner and I could grab lunch? I'm hoping the hospital cafeteria isn't the only option."

"Well, there's a diner across the street, Doc Magoos. I don't know if you'd like it much better." Randi was guessing that FBI agents had more cultured tastes.

He grinned. "Do they have good burgers?"

"Yeah, the best."

"Good enough for me."

Mulder went down the hall to get Scully from the lounge, as Randi gazed after him wistfully. Lydia had caught their last few words together and gave Randi a smile.

"Have a thing for FBI agents, do you?" she joked, adjusting her purse strap.

"I do for this one," Randi sighed, looking back at Lydia. "Think I have a chance?"

"Nope." Lydia looked over Randi's shoulder to see Mulder coming back towards them. "Then again, here he comes. Without his partner."

Randi whipped her head around as Mulder approached them. "She's fast asleep in there. I didn't have the heart to wake her. She had a really lousy night's sleep. Well, I guess I'll go check on that diner." He started to walk past them, saying "If Agent Scully wakes up before I get back, could you tell her where I am?"

Randi stood up. "Agent Mulder! Would you like some company? I'm just about to go on my lunch break."

Mulder shrugged. "Sure."

"Just give me a second," Randi said, taking Lydia's arm and leading her to where Mulder couldn't overhear.

"What are you doing?" Lydia hissed. "You already *had* your lunch break!"

"I know!" Randi looked at her pleadingly. "But you're going on your break, right?"

Lydia started shaking her head. "Ohhh, no...I'm not going to cover for you! I haven't had a break all morning!"

"Please, Lydia!" Randi begged. "I really like this guy. He'll probably be gone tomorrow, so this is my only chance. I'll pay you back somehow!"

"I don't know..." Lydia could feel herself caving in. "What if Weaver finds out?"

"She won't! Please? Just twenty minutes."

Lydia finally nodded and Randi gave her a quick hug. Lydia poked her in the shoulder. "You owe me. Bigtime."

"I love you, Lydia! You're the best!"

Lydia watched the two of them leave, and she shook her head again. That man had no idea what he was in for.

Lucy finished up Mrs. Thompson's medical history, letting her know that Dr. Carter would be with her as soon as possible. She opened the door and collided with a solid body. "Sorry," she said automatically, looking up. "Oh, it's you." Her tone clearly stated her displeasure.

Carter gazed down at her. "Lucy, could I talk with you for a minute?" He glanced over at Mrs. Thompson, who now had her nose in a magazine. "Mrs. Thompson, I'll be with you in just a few moments."

They stepped out into the hall, and Lucy started to read her notes from the patient's chart. "She has a history of..."

"Wait," Carter interrupted her. "Before we get into that, I want to apologize for the way I acted earlier. It was totally uncalled for. I completely over-reacted, and I shouldn't have talked to you like that, especially in front of Dr. Weaver and those two agents. I'm sorry, Lucy."

Lucy was slightly taken aback. She hadn't expected such a thorough apology so soon. But she wasn't about to let him off the hook that easily.

"It wasn't just today. You've been a total...jerk for the past few days. Maybe the last week. What's going on with you?"

Carter looked away, staring down at the floor. He nodded. "I know... I've been a real pain lately. I don't know what it is..."

"You want to talk about it?"

He looked back up into her intense blue eyes. "With you?" The surprise was evident in his voice.

"Look, I know we haven't worked together that long, but...I'm a good listener." Carter just continued to stare at her and Lucy rolled her eyes. "Forget it!" she said abruptly, focusing on the chart again. "Just forget I said anything."

"No!" Carter blurted out, as Lucy looked at him with raised eyebrows. "I mean...yeah, maybe we could talk sometime." He gave her a small smile. "I'd like that."

Lucy returned a tentative smile. She was honestly concerned about

him, and hoped that she could somehow help him. Maybe all he needed was a friend to talk to.

"Ok, Lucy, you can give me that history now."

Something that Carter had mentioned earlier finally sank into her brain, and she gave him a questioning look. "What did you say about agents?"

He barked a short laugh. "I *definitely* have to tell you about that later. It's a good one."

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Kerry knocked on the lounge door and entered, somewhat surprised to see Agent Scully asleep on the couch. She was sitting up, but her head was lolled back and her mouth open. Kerry heard a gentle snore.

Trying to make as little noise as possible, she made her way to the coffeemaker, and leaned her crutch against the table. She made herself a cup and as she turned, her hip bumped into the crutch. It clattered to the floor.

Scully's eyes flew open and her head jerked forward.

"Sorry," Kerry apologized, bending down to retrieve the crutch. "I didn't mean to wake you."

"No," Scully said, trying to clear the cobwebs from her mind. "I'm the one who should apologize. I didn't mean to monopolize your lounge." She checked her watch. "Do you know where Agent Mulder is?"

Kerry shook her head as she took a sip from her mug. "No, I assumed you were both still talking with Carter." She hesitated. "I know this may be none of my business, but...why were you asking me about his temperament earlier? It's ironic because I hadn't noticed anything out of the ordinary until that rather unpleasant exchange he had with his med student."

"I'm sorry, but I'm really not at liberty to discuss this with you." Scully got to her feet. She suddenly realized that her headache was gone. The nap had really refreshed her. "I had better find my partner."

"Someone at the admit desk may know where he is," Kerry said, leading the way out. She was disappointed in Agent's Scully's response, but had to respect it.

Lydia hung up the phone and her eyes widened as Kerry approached her.

"Lydia, where's Randi?" Kerry asked, looking around.

"Uh...she's taking a break."

"Now?" Kerry stared at her. "And you're covering for her?"

"Well, yeah...it was a bit of an emergency, so..." Lydia's voice

trailed off nervously under the scrutiny of Kerry's intense gaze.

Scully wasn't sure what was going on but as she turned her head, she spotted her partner coming down the hall with the missing desk clerk. Kerry saw them at the same time. Randi had not yet noticed that she was the center of attention. She flinched when Kerry called out her name, a little too loudly.

"Hi...Dr. Weaver." Randi was frozen to the spot.

"Care to explain yourself?"

Randi quickly glanced at Lydia, who gave a tiny shrug of her shoulders. Kerry placed a hand on her hip and soundlessly started tapping one foot on the floor.

Randi gulped, frantically trying to come up with a brilliant excuse. "Well...I was just..."

"She was just showing me to the diner," Mulder cut in, feeling sorry for her. Considering he had just consumed the tastiest hamburger of his life, he figured he owed her one.

"Oh, really," Kerry said flatly, not believing a word of it.

"Yeah," Mulder lied easily. "I asked her to come with me, otherwise I would have been hopelessly lost." He glanced at Scully and saw she was trying very hard not to laugh. He could see her lips twitching. "If you'll excuse me ladies, I need to speak with my partner." As he walked away with Scully, he raised his hand and said "Thanks for your help, Randi."

"No problem!" Randi called out after him.

"Lydia, Randi...I'd like to speak with both of you, please." Kerry placed her coffee mug down on the desk a little too forcefully, and liquid sloshed over the side. She started off down the hall, not noticing that neither of the two women she wanted to speak to were following her.

"I'm sorry, Lydia," Randi said in a low tone.

"It's ok. So how'd it go?" Lydia asked curiously.

"Not so good. He's a nice guy and all, but not really my type. \*Plus\*, he says I remind him of his little sister." Randi made a face. "If that's not a turn-off, I don't know what is."

"NOW!" they heard Kerry bellow.

"We're in trouble," Lydia muttered.

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"Oh my God!" Lucy burst out laughing. "You're kidding me, right?"

Carter shook his head, chuckling softly. "Nope. He was dead serious."

They were sitting up on the roof, finally able to get a few minutes away from the ER. Things had calmed down considerably and they were waiting to get x-rays on a patient. Carter had been telling Lucy about his meeting with Mulder and Scully. He had just told her about Agent Mulder's theory on how his girlfriend was a pyrokinetic serial-killer.

"But that's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard! It's \*beyond\* ridiculous." Lucy gave Carter a skeptical look. "They can't really be FBI agents."

Carter grinned. "That's exactly what I said. I figured Jerry was playing a joke on me."

"But they're for real."

"Apparently." Carter was still smiling. He hadn't felt this good all week. Lucy was right. She really *\*was\** a good listener, and talking to her had helped.

"What about the other part? About Roxanne using aliases and...all her boyfriends dying?"

Carter's smile faded. "Well...that's almost just as hard to believe. I know we haven't been together for very long, but..." His voice trailed off.

"Yeah." Lucy patted Carter's knee reassuringly. "I'm sure it's some sort of mistake. I mean, I've never liked Rox..." She felt her face go red. "I mean, even though she sometimes...oh hell," she murmured. "That didn't come out right at all."

"I get your meaning, Lucy," Carter said dryly.

"I'm sorry. It's just that she's never been very nice to me. I don't think she likes me."

"I know Roxanne can be a little..." He searched for the right word. "Abrasive at times. But I hardly think that qualifies her as a killer."

"Of course not," Lucy agreed quickly. "I'm sure it's just a mistake."

Neither of them spoke for a minute. Then Lucy asked "Do you want to talk about why you've been in such a bad mood all week?"

Carter shrugged. "I honestly don't know. Although...according to Agent Mulder, Roxanne is responsible for that too."

Lucy looked puzzled. "How so?"

"He says she's somehow influencing my personality. I believe his exact words were 'to bring me more under her control'."

"I think we should call a psych consult for Agent Mulder," Lucy said, only half joking.

He didn't know whether he should laugh or cringe. It was easier to think Agent Mulder was a fruitcake than to give any credit to his theory. But truthfully, Carter was starting to feel a little uneasy. Why had he begun feeling so out of sorts for no reason? And why did he only feel better when he was with Roxanne? \*Because she's your girlfriend, you idiot!\* his inner voice replied. Come to think of it, that wasn't quite true. He wasn't with Roxanne right now, he was with Lucy. And yet, he found himself feeling calm and relaxed. Carter wasn't sure what that signified, but he decided not to question it.

Although there was a cool breeze blowing, there wasn't any shade to speak of on the roof. Lucy had to shield her eyes against the sun, and it was starting to feel too warm. They sat in silence for a while, simply enjoying the peace and each other's company.

Carter had his hands clasped together, and was staring into space. "Thanks, Lucy," he said suddenly.

"For what?"

"For..." He waved a hand around the air. "For being here...talking to me." He turned to look at her directly. "For being a friend."

Lucy looked into his warm, dark eyes and smiled. "I'm glad I could help," she said softly.

Carter's beeper went off. "The x-rays must be back. I told Randi to page me."

Lucy sighed. "Back to work," she said, standing and stretching her arms out wide."

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"Hello, Randi."

Randi looked up from her nails, and then returned to her filing. "Hi."

Roxanne resisted the strong urge to stick her tongue out at the desk clerk. "I guess Jerry's working the night shift?"

"Uh huh." Randi continued to file her nails.

Roxanne wished someone would fire this rude, incompetent woman. Or at the very least, someone should arrange that Jerry was working whenever she came by. At least \*he\* was friendly. "Is John around?"

"He's taking a break."

Roxanne waited for more information but none was forthcoming. Honestly, talking to this woman was like pulling teeth! "Sooo...when do you expect him back?"

Randi finally relented, growing tired of her game. But she sure liked yanking Roxanne's chain. Nasty woman. "He'll be down any minute. I just paged him."

"Fine. I'll just wait here."

She didn't have to wait long. She heard giggling first, and then John's unmistakable, warm laugh. John and Lucy turned the corner and walked towards her, not even noticing she was there. She folded her arms in front of her chest. "Hi John."

Carter looked at her in surprise. "Roxanne!" He crossed the space between them and gave her a quick kiss. "You're early."

"Yeah, I know. I got my errands finished early and thought I'd just come straight here." She tugged on his sleeve, and he leaned his head down. "I don't suppose you could leave soon?" she whispered into his ear.

Carter laughed uncomfortably, realizing that Randi, Lucy, and several others were staring at them with obvious interest. "You know I can't do that," he said quietly, glancing at his watch. "I get off in another 45 minutes. Why don't you wait in the lounge?"

Roxanne released his sleeve with a small pout. "Fine. I guess I could make a few phone calls from there."

"You know," Randi spoke up. "You really shouldn't tie up the hospital phone."

Roxanne shot her a nasty look. She opened her mouth to say something, but Carter spoke first. "Randi, I don't think a couple of phone calls will matter."

Randi couldn't ignore the pleading look in Carter's face and she gave in grudgingly. She told herself she was doing this for Carter. "Fine. Use the phone."

"Gee, thanks," Roxanne snapped.

"Um, Dr. Carter? The x-rays?" Lucy looked at Roxanne pointedly, hating to be ignored. "Hi Roxanne. How are you?"

"Great, Lucy," Roxanne replied, without even looking in her direction. "John, I'll be in the lounge." She whirled around and marched away.

Randi handed the x-rays to Carter. As he accepted them, he said "Randi, do you have to be so hard on her?"

A defensive retort was on the tip of her tongue, but when she looked into his eyes, she couldn't say it. "Sorry," she muttered.

Carter and Lucy made their way to the x-ray viewing room. He stuck the film into place and they looked at it together. "Well, Lucy? What do you see?"

Without hesitation, she replied "It looks like a compound fracture of the left tibia and fibula."

"Very good." He was pleased, and looked down at her. "What's wrong?"

Lucy was holding her right ear lobe and had a stricken expression on

her face. "My earring! I lost my earring somewhere!"

She had her hair up in a loose bun today, and Carter could see the other diamond stud in her left ear. "Any idea where you might have dropped it?" he asked.

She looked back towards the open door. "I know it was there when we were with Roxanne in the hallway. I don't know why, but sometimes I'll check to make sure they're still in...kind of a habit," she explained. "They were a gift from my mom when I got into med school. I've got to find it!"

"Don't worry. We will." Carter turned on the ceiling lights so they could see better. "If it's not in here, it must be down the hall. We'll just retrace our steps."

They knelt down on the floor and started inspecting every inch of it on hands and knees. "Ugh, I never realized how grimy this floor is!" Lucy muttered. Both of their hands were getting filthy. She was grateful she was wearing dark coloured pants.

Carter chuckled. "I guess this room doesn't exactly have to be sterile."

Lucy was concentrating on the floor and didn't realize how close she was to Carter. "I've got this area covered, Lucy. Why don't you start near the door?" he suggested.

"Yeah, ok," she replied, not even looking up.

"I got it!" Carter said triumphantly.

"You did?" Lucy jerked her head up, connecting solidly with the underside of his chin.

"Ow!" He held out the earring with one hand and rubbed his jaw with the other.

"I'm sorry!" she exclaimed. "Are you ok?"

"I'll live. How's your head?"

Lucy grinned. "My head's fine. You know what they say about stubborn people." She took the earring from him and placed it in her pocket. She would have to clean it with some alcohol before wearing it again. "Thanks, Dr. Carter. I would've been really upset if we couldn't find it."

"No problem."

Carter was still absently rubbing his chin and Lucy took pity on him. "Oh, it still hurts?" Without even thinking, she placed her hand on the side of his face and kissed his jaw. "There, all better now?" she teased.

He gave her a crooked smile, covering her hand with his own. "Lucy..." he said quietly, intending to remove her hand.

"Well, well...isn't this a cozy scene?"

They both jumped at the sound of a sarcastic voice by the door. "Roxanne!" Carter immediately got to his feet, followed by Lucy. "This isn't...It's not what you think!" He could plainly see that Roxanne didn't believe him.

"I'm really disappointed in you, John," she said sadly. Without another word, she ran out of the room.

Carter groaned. "Great! Just great!"

"Please believe me when I say how sorry I am," Lucy said sincerely. "Should I go talk to her? Maybe I can explain what happened..." What had she been thinking? She had just become a little over exuberant when he'd found her earring. She hadn't meant to kiss him. It had just happened. \*Calm down! It's not like you kissed him on the lips\* she thought.

"No, Lucy. You'll only make things worse." Carter realized how insensitive that sounded and he quickly looked at her. Although she said nothing, he could see the hurt look in her eyes. "I didn't mean it like that." He lightly brushed his hand against her arm reassuringly. "I know you're only trying to help. But we'll give her a chance to cool down. Then I'll try to explain that...she just misunderstood an innocent situation."

He placed the x-ray back into its protective envelope. "Let's go talk with Mr. Matthews about his leg." He had briefly considered going after Roxanne but he knew he wouldn't be able to reason with her when she was so upset. He would have to find her later.

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Roxanne was surprised at how calm she felt. Maybe part of her had been expecting this to happen. No...she had truly believed that John would be different. That he would be the one that could make her happy. But he had betrayed her like all the others.

She walked stiffly down the hall and entered the ladies' room. She stood in front of one of the sinks, watching the faucet drip slowly. Her mind wandered again. She had always had his ability...this power...to set things on fire. She couldn't recall when it had first started. But she knew exactly when she had stopped it.

She had always hated insects. One summer day, when she was six, a boy from her neighbourhood started teasing her with a beetle between his fingers. She begged him to stop, but he wouldn't. Usually, she was able to contain and control her power. But on this day, her terror and anger overwhelmed her. The beetle started to smoke and burst into flames. The boy yelped, his fingers slightly singed, but not badly burned. She would never forget the look on his face, or more precisely, the look he gave her. Like she was a freak. Back then, she had only wanted to be liked and accepted. She vowed never to use her power again.

Growing up, she almost forgot about her suppressed ability. But there was something else that came naturally to her. It sounded cliche, but men were drawn to her like moths to a flame. It had always been that way, so she never questioned it. But on the flip side, women usually disliked her. She had never had a close female friend. Not that it really mattered to her anyway, but it was a fact.

Fast forward to almost two years ago. She had been engaged to the man of her dreams. Or so she had thought. But one night, he came to her apartment to tell her the engagement was off. He was in love with someone else. Just like that, no warning at all. Her initial reaction was shocked silence. Then she remembered ranting and screaming, her rage boiling over, out of her control. She never meant for it to happen. But he was standing there, his clothes started to smoke, and then the next minute...poof! He was gone in a sudden whoosh of flames. Funny that nothing else in her apartment had caught fire. The only thing that had been damaged was her carpet, with a charcoal-like stain. To be honest, she'd felt a small twinge of remorse. But it had felt sooo good to release her anger, to feel the full force of her power again. She didn't realize how much she'd missed it.

She moved on to a different city and quickly found a new boyfriend. But the pattern remained the same. In one way or another, the man in her life found a way to disappoint or betray her. So she unleashed her power upon him and moved on.

And then there was John. Sweet, handsome, caring John. From the first moment she'd seen him, she thought he was special. Thought he might be 'the one' she was searching for. But then Lucy had come into their lives. She suspected that something was going on between John and Lucy, and now her suspicion had been confirmed. He was always complaining about something that Lucy had done to annoy him, but she could see below the surface. He had feelings for Lucy, even if he didn't know it yet. She wasn't going to wait around for John to realize it. She had work to do.

Scully smacked her lips, trying to rid her mouth of the salty taste. She didn't know what had possessed her to try some of Mulder's sunflower seeds. She knew she didn't like them. But she'd been a little bored sitting in the waiting area. She was on her way now to the admit desk to ask the clerk to inform them when Roxanne arrived.

Randi was back on the computer, humming away.

"Hi." Scully smiled.

Randi looked up. "Oh, hi! Listen, I've been meaning to ask you...is your hair dyed? Do you get it professionally done?"

Scully's friendly smile stiffened a little. "It's natural."

"Oh yeah? You don't even, ya know, get it highlighted? I'm only asking because I really love the colour."

"Well, thanks...I guess. No, no dye. It's just...me."

"Wow, I wish I was born that lucky," Randi said wistfully. "Oh, and I know it's none of my business, but...are you and Agent Mulder seeing each other?"

Scully stared at her. "No, we are not."

"Too bad. You guys would make a cute couple." Randi went back to her

computer work.

Scully just stood there for a moment, stunned. She gave her head a quick shake and said, "Randi, could you just let me or Agent Mulder know when Roxanne Please arrives? I understand she'll be meeting Dr. Carter here after his shift is over."

Randi grimaced at the mention of Roxanne's name. "Why do you want to talk to her?"

"Just let us know when she arrives. We're in the waiting room."

"She's already here," Randi informed her.

"What? When?" Scully didn't hide her surprise.

"Maybe ten minutes ago. Last I heard, she went to the lounge."

Scully quickly walked to the lounge and looked in. There were several doctors and nurses sitting around, but Roxanne was not among them. She started down the hall, intending to let Mulder know about this news when she saw a blonde woman coming out of the ladies' room. Taking a chance, she called out "Roxanne?"

The woman turned to look at her. "Yes?"

Scully instantly recognized her from the slide Mulder had shown her this morning. She moved closer and brought out her ID. "My name's Agent Scully. I'm with the FBI. I'd like to ask you a few questions."

Roxanne backed away. "What's this about? I don't have anything to say."

"If you'll just come with me, my partner and I..."

Roxanne turned and bolted down the hall, giving Scully no choice but to start running after her. "Stop! We just want to ask..."

Roxanne ran full tilt into Carter, who was just coming out of an exam room. They crashed into the wall together. He almost fell, but managed to stay on his feet. He held his arms around her protectively.

"Roxanne! What's wrong?" he asked with obvious concern.

"Don't touch me!" she screamed, knocking his arms away. Breathing heavily and holding both hands on either side of her head, she took a few steps back. *It's now or never* she thought. The FBI must be here to arrest her. She had to do this now. Closing her eyes, she focused on John.

"Mulder!" Scully yelled. "Get out here!"

Since Roxanne wasn't providing any answers, Carter turned to Scully. "What the hell is going on?"

Scully ignored him for now. She was actually growing concerned for

Roxanne. She almost appeared to be hyperventilating, and her colour wasn't good. "Roxanne, just calm down. There's no need to be alarmed..."

Mulder finally came running down the hall. He watched Roxanne carefully. "Scully, she's doing it! We've gotta stop her!"

"Doing what?" Scully noticed the crowd of ER staff that was gathering around them. "Please, everyone, get back!" she warned.

"Hey, what's going on out there?" Mr. Matthews asked anxiously, craning his neck in an effort to see something.

Lucy was standing in the open doorway, gaping at the scene unfolding before her. She had almost forgotten about the patient. "Don't worry Mr. Matthews. Everything is fine. We'll be with you as soon as we can." With that, she closed the door behind her.

Carter felt his stomach start to churn and his temples began to throb. He was also starting to feel hot. Very hot. "I don't feel very well..." he mumbled, swiping at his forehead with the back of his hand.

Lucy looked at him with a worried expression. She could see he was flushed and breaking out in a sweat. She could actually **feel** the heat radiating from him. She suddenly remembered what Carter had told her up on the roof. Agent Mulder with his crazy theory about how Roxanne had killed her boyfriends. But that was impossible! Wasn't it?

Lucy glanced at Mulder in time to see him draw his gun. He held it steadily with both hands, the barrel pointed at Roxanne. Lucy's eyes widened and she gasped.

"Roxanne!" Mulder shouted. "I know what you're doing! Stop it NOW!" He wasn't even sure if Roxanne was hearing him. She almost appeared to be in a trance, her eyes shut tightly.

"Mulder, have you lost your mind!" Scully snapped. "You can't shoot her! She's unarmed and isn't posing a threat."

Mulder nodded his head towards Carter, who was now slightly hunched over and starting to moan. "Tell that to Dr. Carter. He's toast if we don't do something!"

Randi had joined the edge of the crowd and looked over Lydia's shoulder. "What is she doing?" she whispered. Everyone was surprisingly hushed as they watched in fascination.

"Beats the hell out of me," Lydia replied. She suddenly grabbed Randi's arm. "Oh my God!" she whispered fiercely. "Look at her eyes! Please tell me you're seeing the same thing."

Randi's jaw dropped. "Uh huh," was all she could manage.

Roxanne's eyes were open now and they were glowing strangely...a bright orange-red. A few gasps went up among the crowd and one person screamed.

Mulder was torn. He wasn't sure what to do. His instinct told him he

was rapidly running out of time. He couldn't stand by and do nothing, yet he loathed to just shoot the woman. He glanced at Carter and saw wisps of smoke curling from the sleeve of his lab coat. It had started.

Lucy noticed the smoke at the same time. "Oh, God, she's really doing it!"* she thought incredulously. Carter's face was so red now he looked like he was suffering from a severe sunburn. *I've got to help him!* But how? She backed up a step, the heat surrounding Carter almost unbearable. She bumped into something and turned to find a cart left behind by one of the cleaning staff. There was a bucket of dirty looking water on the bottom shelf.

Without thinking twice, not even knowing if it would help, she heaved the contents of the bucket towards Carter. The only problem was, in her haste, most of the water missed him and drenched Roxanne instead. Roxanne let out a piercing scream, as if she was in agonizing pain. Lucy dropped the bucket, her heart pounding. What had she done? Had she made matters worse?

What happened next is truly unbelievable, but nearly twenty witnesses who were questioned separately later on told the same tale. To put it simply, Roxanne...melted. One second she was there, the next second she was gone. Just like that. Her clothes, jewelry, and shoes were left behind in a puddle of water mixed with brown coloured goo. It would later take a lot of convincing and promises of bonus pay for anyone in the cleaning staff to touch it.

Carter collapsed into a heap on the floor and Lucy rushed to his side. "Dr. Carter! Are you all right? How do you feel?" She placed a hand on his forehead. His skin seemed hot to the touch, but then she could swear she felt the temperature cooling by several degrees. His skin tone was also beginning to return to normal.

"Way to go, Dorothy!" Mulder exclaimed with a grin.

Lucy looked up at him blankly. "My name's Lucy."

"Mulder..." Scully was rolling her eyes, knowing what he was referring to.

"Scully, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore," he deadpanned.

Carter was starting to feel better now. Not just physically, but mentally. It was as if a dark cloud had been lifted from his mind. He didn't even want to think about it right now, but maybe Agent Mulder had been right. Maybe Roxanne had been somehow influencing him.

He looked at all that remained of her and felt surprisingly little. He did feel some sadness, some pity...but for the most part, he wondered what he had ever seen in her. Then again, maybe he was just in shock.

"This never happened when we went swimming together," Carter said blandly.

Of course, Mulder had a theory for this too. "I think water normally didn't have any effect on her. It only became her enemy when she was in the process of using her power."

Scully could sense that he was going to continue on so she placed a hand on his arm. "I think we should let Dr. Carter get some rest." She led Mulder away, as Lucy helped Carter into an empty exam room.

Kerry came down the hallway. She had just come from a staff meeting upstairs and found everyone buzzing about something that had happened. "Did I miss something?" she asked no one in particular. She immediately spotted the mess on the floor; dirty coloured liquid and what looked like someone's clothes and shoes. "Randi, get someone to clean this up now, please!" she called out, shaking her head.

"Are you sure you feel well enough?" Lucy asked anxiously. "Maybe you should rest a little longer."

Carter chuckled as he swung his long legs over the edge of the bed. "I'm fine, Lucy. You can stop hovering now." He stood up and twirled around. "See? I'm fine. My shift is over and I need a drink." He paused. "Care to join me?"

"Ok. If you're sure you're up to it."

"Yes, I'm sure." He led the way out. There was a small crowd of people around the admit desk and Carter wondered what was going on. His question was soon answered.

"I'm sorry, but the police are on their way," Mulder explained. "I know you want to go home, but you'll have to wait to be questioned."

There was a chorus of groans and protests. Carter decided to speak up. "Would you have any objection to us waiting in Doc Magoo's? I promise, none of us will run away."

Everyone looked back at him gratefully, and Mulder nodded. "Sure, that would be fine."

Randi stepped out of the crowd and smiled at Carter. "Hey, Doc. I'm glad you're ok. You know, I always thought Roxanne was a bit of a witch, but..." She stopped when Lydia elbowed her in the ribs, giving her a look. "Sorry," she said ruefully.

"It's ok, Randi. Are you two coming to Doc's?" he asked.

"I would rather go to the bar and get a real drink," Lydia stated. "But I guess Doc's will have to do for now." She glanced at Lucy. "By the way, nice work Lucy. I think you saved our Carter."

Lucy laughed. "Thanks. But if you must know, I was actually aiming the water for Dr. Carter, to put out the smoke. I kind of missed and got Roxanne instead."

Carter hated to think what would have become of him if Lucy *hadn't* missed. He shivered and put an arm around Lucy's shoulder, squeezing it gently. They started walking towards the diner and he bent his head down. "I'm glad you have such horrible aim," he joked. "But

seriously...thanks, Luce."

Lucy smiled up at him. "You're welcome."

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That's it! I hope you liked it. Any feedback is always welcomed and appreciated. Shirley yoshinaka@sprint.ca Thanks :)

End  
file.